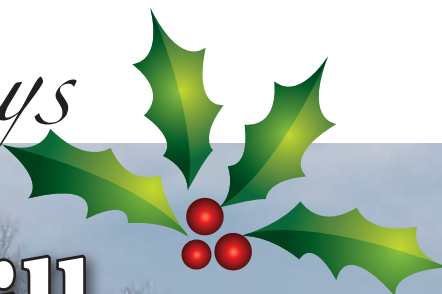


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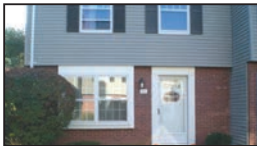
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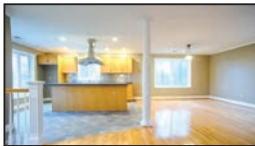
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rocky hill LIFE

January 2017

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"These are smart people, mostly women we see, but smart people who usually had full careers in their home countries."

- Mary Payne

See story page 29

ON THE COVER

Local artist Paul Ott provided Rocky Hill LIFE with this photo to wish a happy holiday season to all of our readers.

Courtesy photo

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Work hard, play hard, laugh a lot

Judith Levi is named president of the Auxiliary at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

If not for a childhood exposure to tuberculosis, Judith Levi might not be here today.

Levi, a Rocky Hill resident, recently was inducted as the 48th president of the Auxiliary at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. The auxiliary has pledged \$1.5 million to the Hope & Healing campaign to support renovations to the hospital's inpatient cancer unit.

It's a cause that's close to heart for Levi, who until several years ago only had been to the hospital for the birth of her son years earlier.

Each year, she had to undergo a routine chest X-ray after being exposed to tuberculosis from a cousin when she was 12. Right after the exposure, she would have a chest X-ray every month, as well as a regimen of nine pills a day.

"That would combat the tuberculosis cells in my body. After about a year, as part of my annual physical, I would have the chest X-rays," she said.

They always turned out fine until Dec. 10, 2003. When the doctor came in along with the technician following the X-ray, Levi remembers thinking, "That's a little strange."

Still, even as the doctor told her she needed a follow-up CT scan, she wasn't overly concerned. She started compiling a list of people to contact, thinking that she had exposed them to tuberculosis.

"I was never thinking cancer. I would have thought I would have had symptoms. I had no cough, nothing. If anything, I was gaining weight. It was so bizarre. It's called the silent killer," she said.

Her mass turned out to be Stage 3 lung cancer. For the next nine months, her life revolved around treatment that included surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

"I was there [at the hospital] almost every day," Levi said.

"When all was said and done, on Friday, Aug. 13, 2004 – it was Friday the 13th and I'm not superstitious – the PET scan showed the cancer was

gone. What I said to my doctor was, 'Now what?' He said, 'You just keep that positive attitude. I'll see you in three months.'"

Feeling a bit at loose ends, Levi joined the hospital's auxiliary, first volunteering at the Butterfly Boutique that specializes in items to help cancer patients.

"When a woman came down and she had just got diagnosed and she was going to lose her hair, I had

to me to say, 'Thank you for what you did for my wife,'" she recalled, starting to cry.

"In that hallway, there's a lot of hugging and tears. It's a very emotional time. I can remember that day like it was yesterday. It made me feel good. That's when I got the bug. This is what life is all about. You get a second chance."

Levi, who grew up in Glastonbury, became a life member

management," she said.

Her company, Property Focus LLC, is involved with the management of six million square feet of real estate in seven different states. She also is a licensed real estate agent who buys and sells properties for herself and friends.

"I'm also the CFO of my husband's [Bruce] third-generation commercial glazing company, Chase Glass. He says 'CFO.' I say, 'bookie,'" she said with the laugh that frequently punctuates her conversations.

They met when she needed a glass company to repair a bullet hole in one of the properties she was managing.

"The glass company I was using went out of business, and a girlfriend of mine knew someone who does glass, and that was 22 years ago," said Levi, who also worked with H&R Block. "I'm a firm believer in learning new things every day of your life."

She became an advocate for lung cancer as well. In 2005, with the help of the Lung Cancer Alliance in Washington, D.C., she approached state Sen. Mary Ann Handley to introduce a bill proclaiming November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month in Connecticut. She testified before the public health committee and the bill passed.

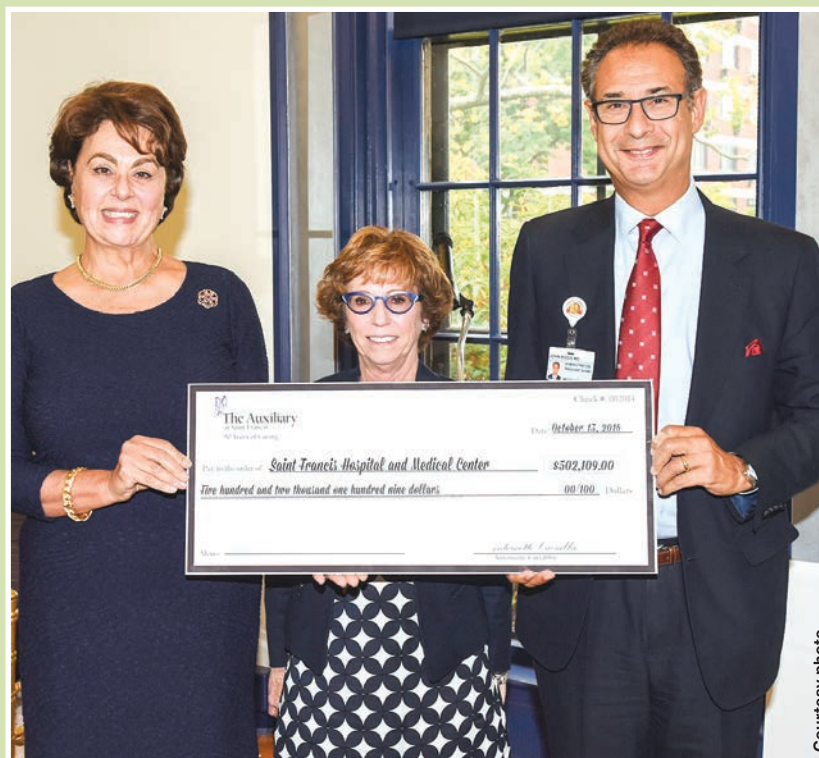
She began to get involved in various other activities at the hospital, such as serving, with her husband, on the committee for "Honoring Those Who Care," an evening of recognition and appreciation for the physicians and staff at Saint Francis/Mount Sinai Regional Cancer Center.

The American Lung Association honored Levi with its 2006 Change the Numbers Campaign Award. The award included a butterfly bush to be planted in her honor at a place of her choosing, which was the Cancer Center at Saint Francis.

The following year, Levi's cancer returned. This time she had treatments using the advanced Cyber-Knife

"I was never thinking cancer. I would have thought I would have had symptoms. I had no cough, nothing. If anything, I was gaining weight. It was so bizarre."

– Judith Levi



Antoinette Carrabba, left, immediate past president of the Auxiliary at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and Judith Levi, the newly installed president of the auxiliary, present hospital president Dr. John F. Rodis with the auxiliary's 2016 donation.

already been there," Levi said.

Reflecting on her days in the shop, she becomes emotional.

"One of the husbands came back

of the auxiliary and joined the board.

She brought with her a wealth of experience.

"My career has been in asset



Photo by Mara Dresner

Judith Levi is the new president of the Auxiliary at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. She began volunteering at the hospital after completing treatment for lung cancer.

Technology. After four treatments, she was again cancer free.

"Radiation kills all cells, whether they're healthy or not. Cyber-Knife is very, very precise," she said. "As opposed to nine months of your life, it's four treatments."

At one of her advocacy trips to

Washington, D.C., in 2009, she met a manager from Accuracy, the manufacturer of Cyber-Knife, who invited her to California to be part of a roundtable discussion representing the patient viewpoint.

The Auxiliary at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center recently celebrated its 90th anniversary.

"Jude has been involved with the auxiliary for over a decade and has worked tirelessly on behalf of the hospital," President Dr. John F. Rodis said.

"Jude lives our mission to be a compassionate and transforming healing presence. Her commitment and dedication to helping others will be assets over the next two years as she continues the auxiliary's long-standing history of successful fund-raising efforts to support the hospital."

Most recently, the auxiliary presented the Saint Francis Foundation with a donation of \$502,109. Since its inception in 1926, it has donated more than \$13 million to the hospital.

The auxiliary was originally known as the Cheer Cupboard and

its first donation to the hospital was more than \$4,000. Levi said the money raised helps the hospital purchase items that otherwise might not be acquired.

"If you have to choose between a piece of surgical equipment that will save someone's life versus a blanket warmer for a patient, it's a no-brainer. But little things mean a lot to a lot of people. It's important when people are there," she said.

"Let's face it. Hospitals are a business and it's competitive. We're all about the patients. This corps of women has been doing this for 90 years. That's a long time."

There are 44 people on the board of the auxiliary, with nine serving on the executive board. More than 1,500 people are members of the auxiliary, which draws from towns around the area. Activities include an annual fashion show, running the hospital gift shop and a yearly tree-lighting ceremony at the holidays.

"We do fun things and we work really hard. Isn't that what's life all about? We work hard, we play hard. I've worked in corporate my whole life and people complain, 'Woe is me.'

Here, I go work with people who don't get paid and we have a ball," she said.

"There needs to be a bit more of that. I work with a very amazing group of women, and a few men, who give their time to give back. I feel honored to be in the position I'm in."

All the money that's raised goes back to the hospital and it's a significant amount. She knows that not everyone understands about her need to give of her time and talents.

"I can tell you when I tell people I'm president of the auxiliary and don't get paid, some people think I'm crazy. It makes me feel good and I think about that time in the hallway. When I get up to Heaven, I want to walk right through the door," she said, chuckling.

"It's such an amazing group of dedicated people giving back. There is no monetary value for us, it's all from the heart. And we all have so much fun.

"If it wasn't fun, I wouldn't be there. It's all about the laughter. I don't think I would have made it through cancer without laughter. It is the best medicine." **RHL**

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Among the best

Rocky Hill is fifth in the state in economic improvement rating

by Mark Jahne
Editor

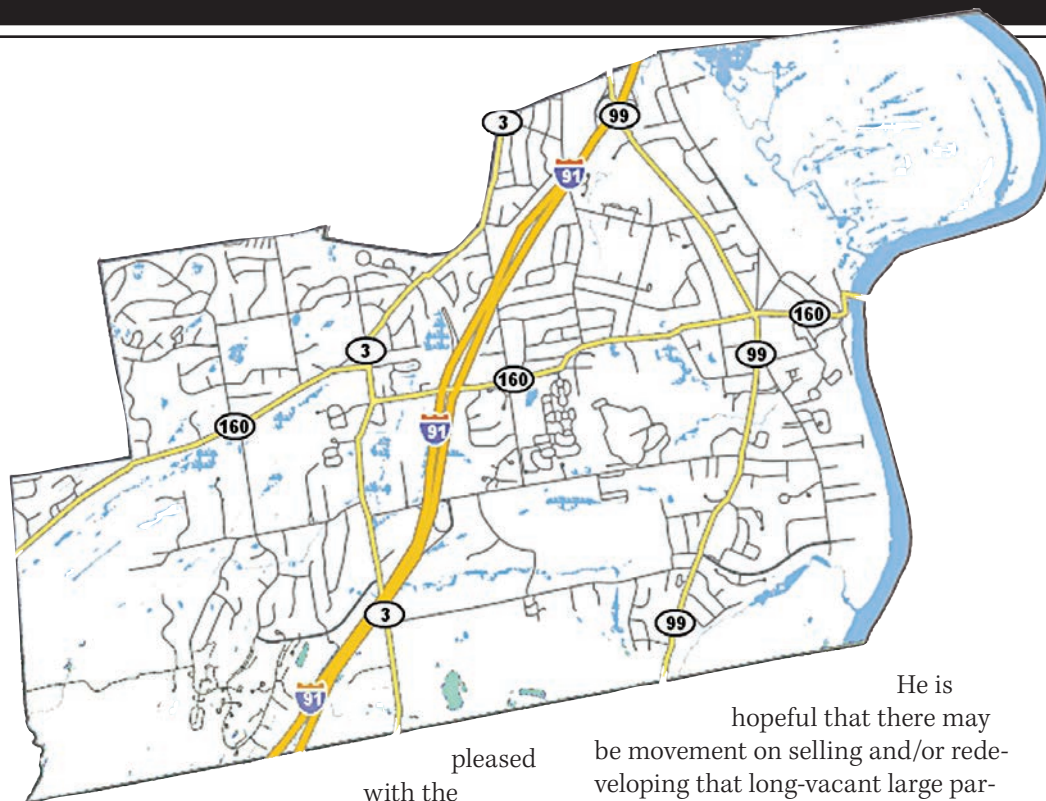
Economic growth may be slow to come for many cities and towns these days, but Rocky Hill is faring better than most. The town ranks fifth in the Connecticut Town Economic Index, recently reported by the Connecticut Economic Digest.

The CTEI measures the overall economic health of all 169 municipalities in the state. Four annual average municipal economic indicators were used as components: total

covered business establishments, total covered employment, real covered wages and the unemployment rate.

Rocky Hill registered a 29.5 percent growth rate under these measurements for the years 2010-2015. The only towns with higher scores were North Stonington, Kent, Eastford and Canaan. This town was number one in the Hartford Metro area.

Town Economic Development Director Raymond Carpentino is



pleased with the results. But he's not surprised. "We've had some spike in interest. Simoniz was just approved for a 47,000-square-foot addition on Dividend Road. We've been talking with the Ames people on and off for the past four or five months."

He is hopeful that there may be movement on selling and/or redeveloping that long-vacant large parcel in the center of town.

In addition, a 90-room Hampton Inn will be constructed on Cromwell Avenue. La Piastra, a prepared food establishment, is moving from Cromwell to a Rocky Hill location along the Silas Deane

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Photo by Mark Jahne

A planned 47,000-square-foot addition to the Simoniz building on Dividend Road is cited by town officials as just one example of an improving local economy.

Highway, he said.

Longterm projects in process will hopefully keep this momentum going.

"We're still working on the Silas Deane streetscape," Carpentino said.

Improvements to some intersections have already been completed.

One of the goals of this project, which started in 2005, is to create a pedestrian element for the town center that does not exist at present.

Design work is under way for the next phase, the intersection of the Silas Deane with Elm Street. The project has stretched over several

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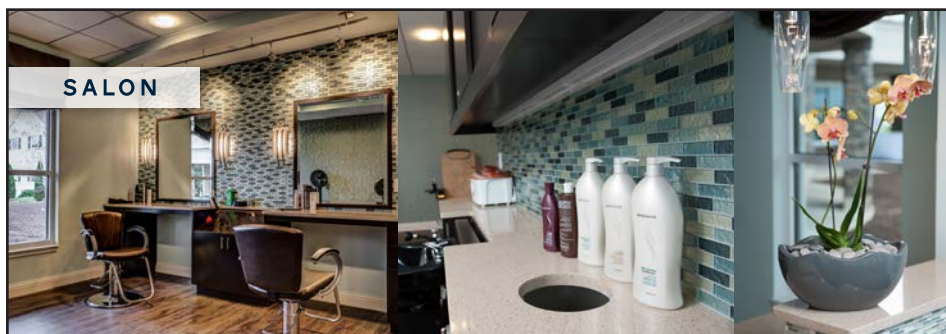


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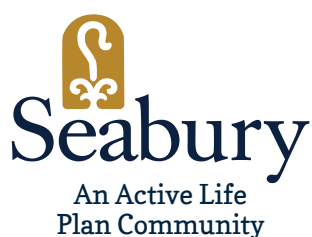


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– Raymond Carpentino

years because the town is biting off one piece at a time and using state grant money to pay for the work.

Carpentino said the town is next in line at the national level for a federal highway grant to complete all of the remaining work. It's been a long wait.

"Finally, we're number one in line," he said.

Features of the completed project will include landscaping, lighting and decorative brick sidewalks that provide a visible indication that one is in the center of town.

"We've worked with the Planning and Zoning Commission over the past couple of years to tweak the zoning regulations," Carpentino said.

There has also been input from the Economic Development Commission. The goal is to create a new zone that would allow for manufacturing uses in areas currently zoned as office parks.

He has had to turn down manufacturing companies that wanted to locate here because all of the parcels currently zoned for manufacturing are taken.

"Over the years, I've had to turn away a number of requests from brokers ... because we had no land for them that's appropriately zoned," he said.

"They don't want to deal with zone changes. It would require a special permit."

The new zone, if created, would solve that dilemma and help the town add to its grand list. His goal is to attract modern, clean, high-tech manufacturing. Parcels are available at Corporate Ridge if the zoning is amended to allow manufacturing uses.

He's also keeping an eye on the Town Center West development at the intersection of Cromwell Avenue and West Street. This large mixed-use project will create new tax revenue for the town.

"As soon as the Town Center West campus comes online, it will become one of our top taxpayers," Carpentino said.

In addition to generating new

revenue, he and other town officials are also looking for ways to reduce expenses. One example is switching to solar power for municipal buildings and schools.

"We're still working with Solar City on our 3 megawatt solar farm," Carpentino said.

The town expects to receive \$90,000 annually in revenue for the land use and save as much as \$250,000 annually in electricity costs.

Larrye deBear, chairman of the town Economic Development Commission, is not surprised by this news. He believes Rocky Hill's location as a second-ring suburb of Hartford makes it an ideal place for business.

"The inner ring is built out. We've got a lot of things going. It's part of a pattern that we've noticed for some time in municipal areas," he said.

"We've had, over the past couple of years, a lot of development and we still have some land available and some vacant buildings available. It's where developers are looking."

He praised Carpentino for his work. There is interest in developing a portion of the former foundry property along the river for commercial uses, deBear said, and there is a large parcel of land on Brook Street that may become available, at least in part, someday.

That land is currently owned by Gardner's Nurseries. There is no indication that the company wants to put it up for sale, but developers often inquire with the town about the possibility, he added.

He's looking forward to the completion of Town Center West and, like Carpentino, is cautiously optimistic that there may finally be progress on the long-vacant Ames parcel.

"There's a lot going on," deBear said.

The Connecticut Economic Digest is a joint publication of the state Department of Labor and the state Department of Economic and Community Development. [RHL](#)



Photo by Allie Rivera

Student of the month

He's always there with a kind hello

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

As Dillon Cerpa walks through the halls of Rocky Hill High School, he is greeted with smiles and high fives. "Everyone who knows Dillon likes him," special education teacher Sandra Bonfiglio said. "You know that Dillon will always be there to greet you with a kind hello."

Now in his junior year, his favorite part of the school day is his Unified Physical Education class.

"I like that class. We get to do fun stuff in there like working out, swimming and shooting baskets," the 17-year-old student said.

Remaining active is important to Dillon. In addition to his work in gym class, he is also a member of the swim team and the Unified Sports program.

Rocky Hill High School junior Dillon Cerpa, 17, is an active member of the Unified Sports teams, swim team and Best Buddies program. His teachers say it is his kindness toward others that sets him apart.

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“Dillon exemplifies the character of RHHS through his charisma, being an active participant in our school community, and getting along with those around him.”

– Rebecca Ebert

“We do soccer, basketball, all types of games,” he said. “I like Unified soccer.”

During the school’s Pep Rally in late October, Dillon was able to show off his skills during a soccer game in which the entire school watched and cheered.

“That was a lot of fun,” he said.

The Unified Sports teams meet throughout the school year and he plays every season.

Along with staying active through Unified Sports, Dillon joined the RHHS swim team during his freshman year.

“My brother was on the swim team and since I like going in the pool, I wanted to join the swim team, too,” he said. “I’m a pretty good swimmer. We get to swim really fast and have races.”

When not practicing in the pool or on the field, Dillon is also a member of the RHHS Royal Blues Marching Band, playing in the section known as “the pit,” the percussion section that remains immobile as the rest of the band marches about the field.

“I get to play a lot of instru-

ments,” Dillon said. “I play the bass drum, the gong, the rain stick, whatever I need to play.”

He began playing with the Royal Blues when he was in the eighth grade and has continued each year. Since the sixth grade, Dillon has also been part of the Best Buddies program that pairs students up for social activities.

“We play board games together or sometimes we’ll have a party,” he said.

When not in school or participating in one of his various activities, he enjoys spending time at home with his family including his mother, father and older brother Chris.

“I love when my brother’s home,” Dillon said. “We play foosball and ping pong and play video games together.”

The family also enjoys their yearly tradition of watching the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade together.

“I like seeing the big blow-ups,” Dillon said of the oversized balloons.

During his free time, he likes to swim in his family’s pool or go on the swing set. As it gets colder out-

side, he enjoys watching television and playing video games such as Mario Kart and Super Smash Brothers.

The teachers who get to work with Dillon on a daily basis praise his dedication to schoolwork and kindness toward others as qualities that set him apart.

“Dillon cares about doing his best and not only seeks out assistance when needed, but offers to help those around him as well,” special education teacher Rebecca Ebert said. “Dillon exemplifies the character of RHHS through his charisma, being an active participant in our school community, and getting along with those around him.”

“He always wants to make sure that he gets things right and does a good job,” Bonfiglio said. “He reaches out to other students to help them and other teachers as well.”

It is those acts of kindness that are the reason why teachers say he is so well liked and can be seen greeting people throughout the halls.

“He’s one of those kids that you notice if he isn’t there,” Bonfiglio said. **RHL**

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From the Mayor's desk

These are busy times in Rocky Hill

by Claudia Baio

Happy December. 'Tis the season. We have so much to cover, but also the holiday spirit abounds. If you have been in and around town hall, you no doubt have noticed that our town staff have taken the words "deck the halls" to heart as they gave it their all in the town department decorating contest.

From candy canes and elves, Mrs. Claus offering cookies and cocoa, to winter wonderland, Frosty and Rudolf, fireplaces with stockings, old-fashioned nostalgia, decorated windows to rival Macy's, a family Christmas living room and even a sparsely decorated area where the Grinch stole Christmas, the creativity was endless.

Deputy Mayor Joe Kochanek and I had the difficult task of judging the friendly competition. That was tough because everyone did such a great job. Certificates were awarded for a variety of categories, with the top award going to the Board of Education. Please stop by and take a look.

The holiday spirit continued as Santa made a special visit to help me light the town Christmas tree at our Winterfest. This traditional event is always such a nice time for our community, with Santa, carolers, horse-drawn wagon rides and more.

As we take a step back to last month, Veterans Day stands out, as it always does in November. We recognized our veterans in a number of ceremonies around town.

The traditional ceremony was held in the town center at Center Cemetery. Deputy Mayor Kochanek (a proud Navy veteran himself), former mayor and current councilman Anthony LaRosa and I joined in with Interim Town Manager John Mehr, Parks and Recreation Director Lisa Zerio and staff member Walt Sykes, as well as state Sen. Paul Doyle.

We were in attendance with

many veterans and other members of our community in this ceremony that included our impressive town color guard. Thank you to veteran and American Legion member Ray LaVoie, who coordinates with our town to hold a lovely and poignant ceremony, and thank you to our veterans.

Rocky Hill students remembered our veterans as well. The students of Griswold Middle School participated in a run for our veterans, raising money that will be donated to the Veterans Home. Nice job to Mr. Watson, his team, and the veterans who came out to be honored and show their mutual support.

Our elementary schools also took action to honor and remember our veterans. Stevens School had some special guests, veterans who were grandparents of students within the school. Members of the Stevens community donated to participate in the opportunity to wear red, white and blue.

The proceeds were given to support our veterans. I paid my visit to Stevens School in my red, white and blue to make my donation towards this worthy cause.

West Hill School also held a special Veterans Day assembly and parade. Senator Doyle and I had the honor of participating in that event as well. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Zito and board members Dilip Desai, Maria Morello Mennella and Barry Goldberg were also in attendance and joined the school community for their parade through the route, which was marked with reminders of the 11 memorials in Washington, D.C. Principal Scott Nozik and Vice Principal Louise Adamow led a really fabulous and touching ceremony.

Rounding out the day's events were those at the Veterans Home honoring Vietnam vets, and at our senior living facilities, all with a veterans' pinning and proclama-

tion ceremony. If you see a veteran or an active member of the military, thank them.

We had some exciting accolades for Rocky Hill recently. The town received a Municipal Excellence Award at this year's CCM annual meeting for innovative special needs activities for its Miracle Field. Mr. Mehr, Ms. Zerio and I had the pleasure of accepting the award.

The Hartford Business Journal reported on Rocky Hill and our economic development Director Ray Carpentino as the town was ranked as a regional leader in economic development.

I am pleased to report that on Dec. 2 we successfully closed on the purchase of 45 Meadow Road, the riverfront property purchased as part of the mission of our farmland preservation and land acquisition for open space.

Allow me to shout out to the Rocky Hill Royal Blues Marching Band. They are the state champions of the USBands New England Championships. What a great way to end the season.

The Royal Blues Marching Band won the 2016 Class 1A Connecticut State Championship. This is the first state championship for the band since 2004 and by far the youngest group of students since James Shuman has been band director.

The Royal Blues also placed second among five other bands in their class with a score of 83.70 and received the highest in the music ensemble caption in the region. Congratulations to Mr. Shuman, his team, and to the families of the Royal Blues.

Please join me for our next Coffee with the Mayor on Friday, Dec. 16, from 9-11 a.m. at The Atrium, where we will be collecting hats, scarves and mittens for our Human Services Department.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, or whichever holiday you celebrate, may it be merry and bright. May you have a new year filled with happiness and health.

Thank you to all who reach out with your thoughts, comments, suggestions and kind words. As always,



Mayor Claudia Baio and Deputy Mayor Joseph Kochanek presented Leo Zirrolì with a town proclamation honoring him on the occasion of his 102nd birthday.

if you would like to speak with me, I welcome hearing from you. Feel free to contact me at my town office 860-258-2740 or via email at cbaio@

rockyhillct.gov or follow me on Facebook at Claudia Baio for Rocky Hill. My town office hours are held on Fridays. **RHL**

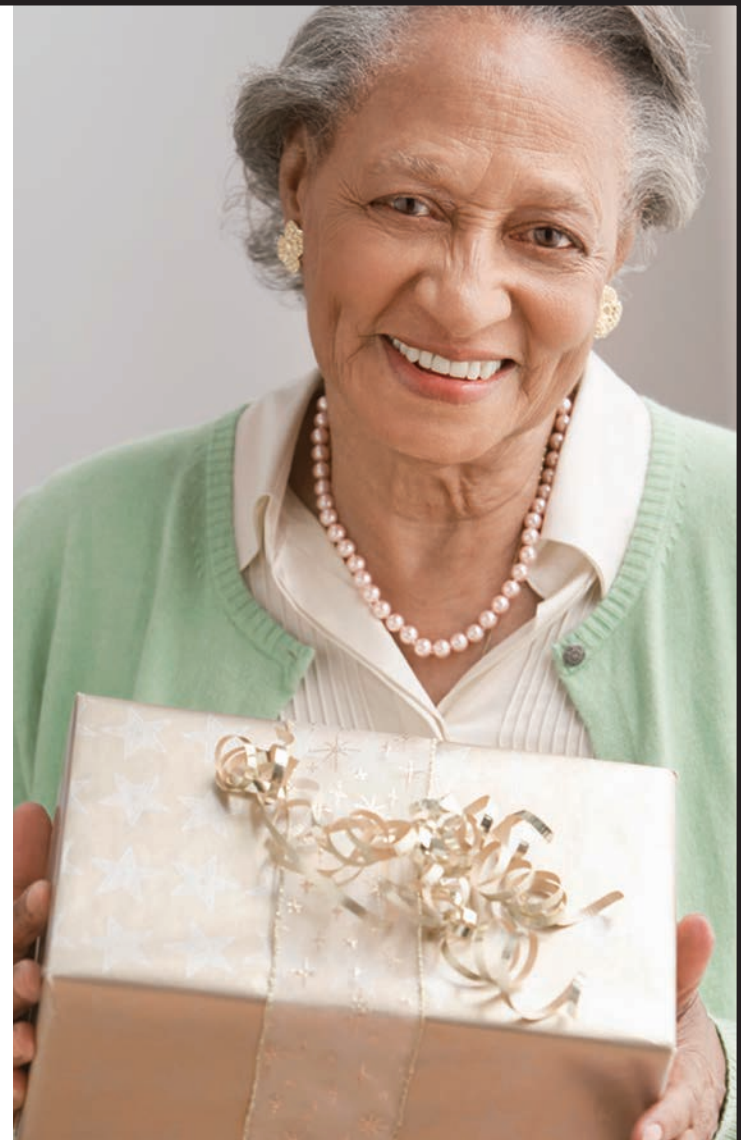
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Laura Langhammer, practice manager at the Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill, makes sure her dog Piper does not eat anything dangerous to his health during the holiday season.



Photos by Mark Jahne

Keeping pets safe

Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill offers holiday advice

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The winter holidays may be a wonderful time of year for people, but they can be a danger to household pets. The Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill shares its expertise to help keep dogs and cats safe.

"Thanksgiving, the big thing is food. You want to avoid grapes and raisins," Dr. Kristin Haviar said. "Onions aren't good."

These food items are toxic to dogs and can cause kidney failure. Fatty foods, gravy and bones are not advised, either, unless one savors expensive veterinary bills. Chocolate, especially dark chocolate, can also be toxic to a dog.

"Try not to feed them the scraps, especially if they're not used to it," she added.

Another food warning involves peanut butter and anything containing artificial sweeteners, especially xylitol. This is so dan-

gerous for cats and dogs that if they ingest it they will likely wind up in the hospital.

Decorations are another potential hazard. Dogs should not be allowed to drink water from a container holding a live Christmas tree because of the sap and other pollutants. Tree water is also a breeding ground for bacteria.

It is also vital to keep alcoholic beverages away from pets. These can cause comas, respiratory failure and even death.

"If you have cats in the house, avoid tinsel at all costs," Haviar said. "Cats love to eat tinsel."

The problem is that it tends to get caught in their gastrointestinal system and can create a blockage. Removing it requires a surgery.

"If you have a cat, you might want to anchor your tree well," she added, since felines may not be able to resist the temptation to

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“If you have cats in the house, avoid tinsel at all costs. Cats love to eat tinsel.”

– Dr. Kristin Haviar

climb the tree.

Small ornaments present choking and obstruction hazards for dogs and cats and can cut their mouths if they break. Lilies are deadly to cats and real candles present a fire hazard if knocked over by pets or people.

“Holly can cause gastrointestinal symptoms and nausea. The same with mistletoe,” the doctor added.

Wires and batteries should be protected from curious paws. These carry the risk of electrocution and/or burns to the mouth and esophagus.

Then there is the issue of company coming for dinner. A high-strung dog might not want all those unfamiliar people grabbing at it and could bite in self-defense. Not to

mention they may dislike all that noise.

Haviar advises talking to your veterinarian first. The solution could be as simple as keeping the animal in a special, private room, or administering a tranquilizer.

Another piece of advice is not to leave pets outside in the cold for a lengthy period of time. Make sure to use pet-friendly sand or ice melt on walks and driveways so that they don't ingest harmful chemicals when using their tongues to remove particles from their paws.

Some people like to dress up their pets for the holidays. Haviar said that is OK but any clothing, hats, bows, etc., should fit properly and not create any kind of hazard for the animal.

Perhaps the best suggestion is to maintain a pet's exercise and eating habits as close to the norm as possible. **RHL**

For more information contact the Animal Hospital of Rocky Hill at 860-563-1027 or animalhospitalrh.net. The facility is located at 588 Cromwell Ave.



Dr. Kristin Haviar holds a pair of Chihuahua puppies that were rescued from New Britain.

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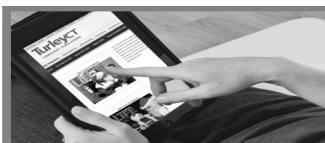
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Making communities better

Central Connecticut Health District celebrates 20th anniversary

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

If you've ever eaten at a local restaurant, had your hair cut at a salon or gone for a swim at a public pool, you can thank the Central Connecticut Health District for helping ensure a safe experience.

CCHD recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. It was founded in 1996 when Rocky Hill and Wethersfield came together to form the Rocky Hill/Wethersfield Health District.

Berlin voted to join 1998, when the name was changed to the Central Connecticut Health District. Ten years after the original merger, Newington joined the district. Back in 1996, the health district served fewer than 52,000 residents. That number has grown more than 85 percent to approximately 97,000.

"The Central Connecticut Health District is committed to improving the quality of life in our communities through prevention of disease and injury, fostering of a healthy environment, and promotion of the health of our residents. The health district was started to take advantage of combining resources to serve the needs of Rocky Hill and Wethersfield more efficiently," Director of Health Charles K. Brown Jr. said.

By working together, the towns could initially have the services of a full-time director of health, and sanitarians to provide environmental health services. This expanded over time to include community programs like health education, vaccinations and emergency preparedness planning.

The responsibilities of the CCHD are varied

and include routine inspections of food service establishments, motels, septic systems, public swimming pools, day care centers, salons and private wells. Staff also investigate property complaints and reported cases of childhood lead poisoning, as well as track and follow up on reports of communicable diseases.

CCHD also plans and implements a variety of programs including annual influenza and pneumonia immunization clinics, the Smiles for Life Senior Dental Program, the Putting on AIRS asthma prevention program, lead poisoning prevention and a Four-Town Walking Competition.

"I think that the practice of public health has changed over the years. In addition to the foundation of disease prevention efforts, evidence shows that the conditions that exist where you work and play also impacts the overall health of each of our residents," Brown said.

"Are there places to walk safely and get active in your neighborhood? Do you have access to healthy food? Is the place that you live safe and is your community engaged in their health and well-being?"

"We call these things the social determinants of health and public health agencies are increasingly working with community partners to address these conditions to make the biggest impact in the long-term health status of all our residents," he added.

He leads a staff of eight full-time and three part-time employees. There's also a 13-member



The Central Connecticut Health District recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. State Sen. Terry Gerrata, left, presents a state citation to, from left, Director of Health Charles K. Brown Jr. and CCHD board member Carolyn Wysocki, while state Rep. Gary Byron of Newington looks on.

Board of Health. Programs are funded through a combination of state and local governments, grants from state and federal agencies, and fees from licenses and services.

"Public health is all about prevention and the Central Connecticut Health District is proud to have served our communities for 20 years in this role," Brown said.

"I think that our vaccination program has been very successful over the years. During the H1N1 pandemic, CCHD staff and volunteers vacci-

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nated 6,335 people against the flu virus. We get great support from the community and our outstanding corps of volunteers that make sure that our communities are protected," he added.

"I am also extremely proud of our environmental health staff who work every single day to ensure the health of the communities we serve. You probably never see them in action, but they work tirelessly to make sure that food-borne outbreaks don't have a chance to make headlines by inspecting restaurants and educating food service workers on proper food handling to prevent disease."

The efforts of CCHD reach thousands of area residents.

"We generally provide around 2,500 flu shots every year during our mass vaccination clinics. Our environmental health staff conducted 1,478 food service inspections last year, 179 salon inspections, and responded to numerous housing and environmental complaints," Brown said.

"Our Putting on AIRS asthma program conducted 72 home visits around our region to help children suffering from asthma improve the management of their condition. We licensed 528 food service establishments in the four towns we serve last year."

Judy Sartucci of Rocky Hill was appointed by her town to serve on the board in December 2007 and now is the district's chairman. But she has been involved in public health for much longer than that. She retired in 2003 and previously worked for the state Department of Public Health, among other positions.

One of her roles was to work

with health districts and she was involved when Rocky Hill and Wethersfield first considered joining forces. She said the regional organization offers benefits to the towns.

"It brings a nice structure for addressing public health concerns in the community and providing public health services. What we found with public health districts and regional health departments versus individual town or city health departments is very often they're able to provide a little bit more and better public health services than any of those smaller towns are able to provide on their own," she said.

For example, an individual town might only have one sanitarian. With the regional system, there's always someone available for backup if that person is on vacation or away for training.

"Another example is being able to do good health planning for the towns as a group," she added.

Sartucci has noticed an increase in programs that help improve quality of life, such as fall prevention for senior citizens, safe driving for both seniors and teenage drivers, and nutrition.

"A lot of what we're doing is in the background in terms of trying to prevent disease and trying to be healthy. We're not doing this entirely on our own. We may spark an idea to get things going, then the director of health and his staff will pull people together and work with them," she said.

"We look a lot on the preventative side of things, better nutrition, improving exercise. We look for opportunities to improve health and take charge of decisions about health. Public health has been involved for a long time, with the

tobacco control piece going back several decades.

"It's one of three main areas we've gone after. We've found if we can work with people in terms of improving nutrition, getting food they need and better food choices, keeping their weight down, exercising, not smoking or using tobacco products or stopping if they are using, in the long run, it helps them be healthier and it helps bring down health care costs in this country."

She said health information is a major component of public health.

"With the arrival of the Internet and social media, in some ways it's better in terms of information and it's sometimes confusing. Providing health information is another big area we're involved in," she said.

"Emergency preparedness is another new area. Even in the '90s, the government was already putting money in and starting to look at emergency preparedness planning. Certainly since 9/11 that's grown tremendously."

She expects that the health education aspect of the department will continue to evolve.

"It's constantly changing. That's one thing that's really challenging about public health," she said. "The health district is there to help prevent disease, the health district is there to respond when the community needs us, and the health district is there to help people make [better] choices about their health."

Brown said CCHD has expanded its offerings through the years.

"Over the last 20 years, the basic focus of this agency has been on disease prevention and that has not changed. The environmental health services that we provide through our enforcement of the public health



Health Educator Lori DiPietro, left, and Ann Hartman, assistant director of community health of the Central Connecticut Health District, had information to go this past summer at the Rocky Hill free concert series.

code are foundational and serve to protect our residents from food and water-borne diseases," he said.

"Our vaccination program helps to provide enough immunity within the community to protect everyone against infectious diseases like influenza and pneumonia. Now we are trying to engage the communities in healthy behaviors by promoting walking and eating healthier to prevent and address chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease," Brown added.

"CCHD works hard every day to make our communities healthier. The work we do to prevent disease, promote healthy behaviors and protect against health threats sometimes goes unnoticed, but the end result is happier, healthier communities. That's why we do what we do." **RHL**


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People notes

Amanda Rae Brousseau and **Peter Daniel D'Addeo Jr.** were married Aug. 20 at Giando on the Water in Brooklyn, N.Y. Fernando Ruiz officiated. The bride is the daughter of Lisa and Steven Brousseau of Saranac, N.Y., and the groom is the son of Carmela and Peter D'Addeo of Rocky Hill.

The bride's sister, Nicole Rose, was matron of honor. Bridesmaids were Cassie D'Addeo, sister of the groom, Regina Contini and Danielle Siskavich. Danica Fabi, cousin of the groom, was the flower girl. The groom's brother Steven D'Addeo served as best man. Groomsmen were Joseph Boccagno, Gian D'Angelo and Michael Scanlon. The bride is a graduate of Saranac Central High School and the Hair Design Institute in Manhattan. She is employed at Medusa Salon in Brooklyn. The groom is a graduate of Rocky Hill High School and Manhattanville College. He owns Second Stroke Mopeds in Brooklyn.

Hannah Garrahy, an Eastern Connecticut State University student, helped christen the new Proscenium Theatre with an inaugural performance of "Cervante's Pedro, The Great Pretender."

Andi Duro, Tej Patel, Brooke Dunnery and **Brianna Hollister** earned high honors for the first marking period at the University High School of Science and Engineering, an all honors STEM and Early College Model Magnet School on the University of Hartford campus. **Neil Patel** earned honors.

Brooklyn Bradley, Madison Bradley, Eugenia Cho, Gabrielle Grant, Jessica Grodovich, Lan Lou, Yining "Ivy" Liang and **Laura Outeiro** earned high honors for the first marking period at Mercy High School. **Junkai "Apple" Hu, Luoqi "Miranda" Liu** and **Sixian "Spring" Li** earned first honors. **RHL**



Amanda Rae Brousseau and Peter Daniel D'Addeo Jr.

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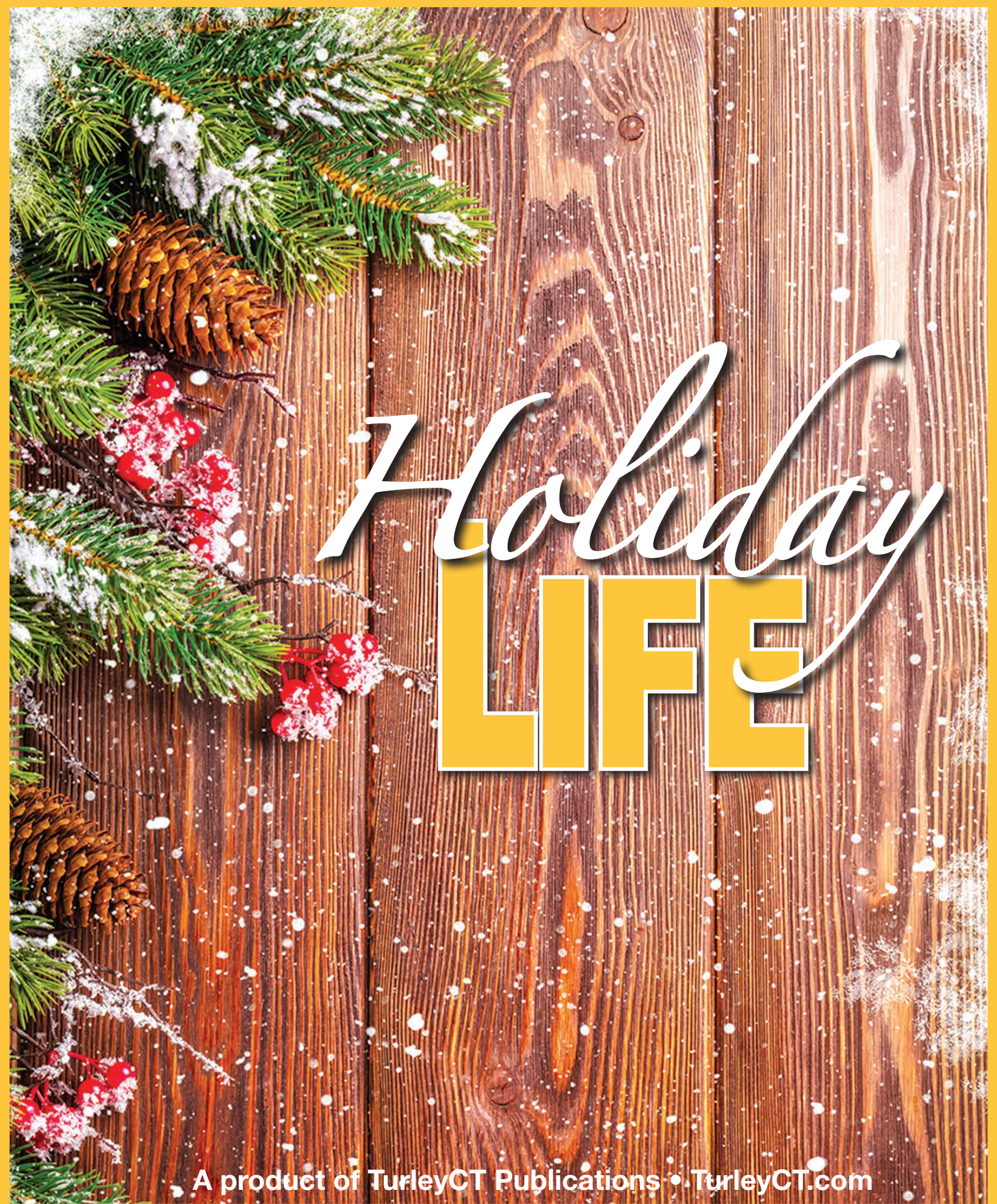
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Dreaming Of A GREEN Christmas

Tips to make
your holiday more
environmentally friendly

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

Green candles, green wreaths and green table runners don't necessarily add up to a green Christmas. The season tends to result in more garbage and more energy consumption, but with a bit of effort and planning, the environmental impact of the holiday season can be reduced.

"I like the idea of buying a real Christmas tree versus a fake one," said Margery Winters, assistant director at the Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, adding, "It smells better and it's more in keeping with the season."

Christy Page, assistant park naturalist at Westmoor Park in West Hartford also advocates

for live trees, saying, "They are a renewable resource, and the Christmas tree farms provide bird and animal habitats throughout the years as the trees grow to useable size."

LED lights are more energy efficient, which is more eco-friendly, Winters said.

She also suggested pruning other evergreens, including holly and ivy, to bring inside and use as decorations during the Christmas season.

To prevent any bugs from coming in with pine cones, she suggested putting them in a 150-degree oven for 30-60 minutes.

"Keep it simple," Winters said.

"Use less plastic and more



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Holiday LIFE

natural materials.”

When the dropping needles signal it's time to take down the tree, Winters said she likes to dismantle the tree with pruning shears and use the branches as mulch in her garden to keep the ground cold and the perennials from popping up prematurely if the temperature rises.

Every year, Kasha Breau, the lead teacher naturalist at Connecticut Audubon Society,

“There’s something special about giving your time.”

– John Calandrelli

Center at Glastonbury, puts her Christmas tree up outside instead of inside.

She decorates a small evergreen tied to a post with cold-weather ornaments for the birds, such as bagel slices covered with peanut butter and dipped in birdseed, and kabob-like decorations using fresh cranberries, pieces of apple, grapes and orange slices.

“You can use the green floral wire” to hold the food, forming a loop at the bottom so it does not fall off, and hanging it on a branch. When the fruit has been eaten, you can remove

the wire, wipe it off, put on more food and rehang it, making your tree different every time. Slices of apple and oranges can also be hung with string or wire.

“It makes your tree a really friendly place,” she said.

It doesn't have to be an evergreen tree, Breau said, noting that bird-friendly ornaments can be hung from any tree, and lights can also be added.

“That way there's no mess of a tree in the house, no needles falling off. ... It's something a little bit different,” she said.

“Instead of giving a lot of ‘stuff’ at Christmas,” Peter McKnight, a member of the Connecticut Sierra Club who works in West Hartford, suggests “giving a donation to an eco-friendly organization or to a group you know the recipient supports.”

Page echoed that suggestion.

“Donate to something good on behalf of someone – there are a lot of organizations that have ways to ‘gift’ someone by donating in their name. Find an organization that fits the passions of the person you are trying



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Holiday LIFE

to buy for, and use the amount you would have spent on a physical gift to donate in their name instead," she said.

If it seems an envelope isn't enough to open, McKnight advocated for adding "something small, useful and consumable that won't end up in a landfill," such as soap made at a local farm or a mini loaf of bread.

John Calandrelli, Connecticut Sierra Club's local program manager, avoids Black Friday "at all costs," calling it the most important step to having a greener Christmas.

Rather, he said, "Give of yourself" to family and friends. "There's something special about giving your time: you don't know how much of it you have and once it's gone, you can't get it back.

"Promise them one back rub or take them to ride a horse or take them ice skating. Your time and caring are more important than anything you can give them. If they like to open something on the holiday, you can wrap your giving in a box or envelope. Your gift will keep giving after the holiday craziness is long gone."

Page likes giving "adventures



instead of gifts," such as certificates for a shared experience such as camping, hiking, canoeing, or even going to see a movie together.

Cheri Collins, coordinator at the Wethersfield Nature Center, said, "One thing that people have been doing in recent years, that I like and have done as well, is instead of using paper, to buy some really nice fabric to wrap gifts in."

The fabric can be reused to wrap future gifts, or, if a dish towel or scarf were chosen, they can become usable gifts as well.

"I like to hand make gifts for people," she said.

In addition to handmade and home-baked items, she likes to give herbs and other plants to friends.

For Doug Jackson, a park naturalist at Westmoor Park, a green Christmas is a part of green living. However you define it, 'green' is a more simple lifestyle that reduces "the amount of things we consume," he said.

"If you have been in the habit of making extensive light displays during the holiday season, then scale it down in size. ... For family travel plans, be intentional about how much driving you do during the holidays. ... Make your home as energy efficient as possible, in as many areas as possible: heating, lighting, etc.," Jackson said.

That way, eco-friendly efforts will extend into the new year. **RHL**



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Holiday FAVORITES

From our... recipe files ...to yours

Our favorite recipes for the holidays or other days

The holidays are a time of giving, and of creating special meals for family and friends. With that in mind, staff members at TurleyCT Community Publications are sharing some of our very favorite recipes, delicious at the holidays or any time of the year.

Italian Anise Cookies

Ingredients:

3/4 cup sugar
1 stick butter
2 large eggs
1/4 cup milk
1 teaspoon anise extract
2 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon fine salt

Directions:

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Coat baking sheets with non-stick spray.

Beat first five ingredients on low speed. Beat in the next three ingredients until blended. Drop rounded teaspoons of dough onto the cookie sheets about 2" apart. Bake 10 to 12 minutes until golden on bottom. Cool on a wire rack. Dip tops in glaze (below).

Glaze: Combine one cup confectioner's sugar, 4 to 5 tsp. milk and a tsp. of anise extract. After glazing, top with a sprinkle or colored sugar of your choice.

Patty Ewert, one of our account executives, shared this recipe for easy Italian anise cookies. She said they're great for the holidays.

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Holiday LIFE

Bermuda Christmas Cassava Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds (about 4 1/2 cups) *harina de manioc*
(cassava meal, available at Hispanic markets and some specialty food shops)
- 8 cups milk
- 3/4 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled
- 2 pounds chicken breasts, halved
- 1 1/2 pounds chicken thighs and drumsticks
- 3 pounds boneless beef chuck, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 8 large eggs
- 1 1/4 teaspoons freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 3/4 cups firmly packed light brown sugar

Directions:

In a large bowl, combine *harina de manioc* and milk, stir until well combined. Cover and let stand 3 hours or overnight.
In a heavy 4-quart saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to boil with the thyme. Add chicken, cover and simmer 30 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chicken to a bowl and reserve the broth. Skin and bone the chicken and cut it into 1-inch pieces. Bring reserved broth to a boil, add beef and cook, covered, over medium-high for 5 minutes or until it just begins to boil. Transfer beef with the slotted spoon. Pour broth into a heatproof bowl, skim fat from surface and reserve. To the beef, add the chicken, pepper and a teaspoon of salt, tossing until combined. Add the melted butter to the *harina de manioc* mixture, using your hands to blend until the butter is completely incorporated. In a bowl, whisk together the eggs, the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoon salt, nutmeg, vanilla and brown sugar until smooth. Gradually add it to



This amazing meat pie recipe comes from Lynn Woike, editor of West Hartford LIFE and Valley LIFE.

"Because the co-worker with whom my sister shared a cab in 1978 panicked when he realized he'd forgot the cassava meal back at the hotel, our little German-Italian family will eat Bermuda Pie again this Christmas. A foodie, my sister followed him into a little market the cabbie detoured to on the way to the airport and bought the magic ingredient to a dish she'd never heard of. My ex-mother-in-law, a native of Bermuda, shared her recipe and my sister has been making her own version of it ever since."

the *harina de manioc* mixture, stirring with a wooden spoon until well combined.

Pour half the batter into a well-buttered 5-quart baking pan that is 14 1/2 inches by 10 inches by 2 1/4 inches and spread evenly. Spoon the meat mixture over the batter, lightly pressing it into the batter. Spoon about 1/2 cup of the reserved broth over the mixture, or enough to moisten the meat well, then spread the remaining batter over the meat, leaving a 2-inch wide opening in the center of the pie. Brush the top with some of the reserved broth and place the pie on a baking sheet in the middle of a 350-degree oven for 90 minutes to 2 hours (or more), while basting the top every 20-30 minutes. The pie is done when the top is a deep gold and a tester comes out moist but not sticky. If the edges of the pie become very dark, cover them loosely with foil. Let the pie cool 20 minutes before serving. Serves 12-14.

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Here's another meat pie recipe, this one from Mark Jahne, editor of Newington LIFE, Rocky Hill LIFE, Cromwell LIFE and Wethersfield LIFE.

My mother (Theresa) likes to cook this traditional French-Canadian holiday meal for Christmas and New Year's Day. Tourtiere – also called meat pie or pork pie – is classic winter comfort food. The following is a recipe for two pies.

Tourtiere

Ingredients:

2 pounds ground pork
2 medium onions, chopped and mashed
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon allspice
Double crusts for two 9-inch pies

Place all ingredients in a large pot and add enough water to cover about three-quarters of the ingredients. Simmer, stirring frequently, for about 30 minutes. Adjust seasonings to taste. Divide the mixture between two pastry-lined 9-inch pie plates. Cover the top with pastry crust and make slits in the top crust to allow steam to escape. Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 375 and bake another 20 minutes, or until the pies are golden brown. Makes 8 to 12 servings.

Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients:

1/2 pound bittersweet chocolate
1/2 pound semisweet chocolate
1 cup heavy cream
2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur (optional)
1 tablespoon prepared coffee
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
Confectioners' sugar
Cocoa powder

Directions:

Chop the chocolate finely with a sharp knife. Place in a heat-proof mixing bowl.

Heat the cream in a small saucepan until it just boils. Turn off the heat and allow the cream to sit for 20 seconds. Pour the cream through a fine-meshed sieve into the bowl with the chocolate. With a wire whisk, slowly stir the cream and chocolates together until the chocolate is completely melted. Whisk in the orange flavored liqueur, if using it, and the coffee and vanilla. Set aside at room temperature for one hour.

With 2 teaspoons, spoon round balls of the chocolate mixture onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roll each ball of chocolate in your hands to roughly make it round. Roll in confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder or both.

These will keep refrigerated for weeks, but serve them at room temperature.

This recipe, involving chocolate and sinfully good, comes from Alicia B. Smith, our associate editor.

"Growing up my family had several holiday traditions – cutting our own tree, our cardinal bird, midnight mass – but none of them related to food. When I got married, I was determined to carry on some of the traditions I had enjoyed while also incorporating those from my husband's family. That's why we have an enormous tree stuffed into our living room and I make bacon wrapped scallops to enjoy while we decorate said tree. One year I decided that we needed chocolate, because why not? This recipe was from an episode I saw on the Food Network and thought it would be the perfect thing. They are messy to make, but delicious to eat!"

When we decorate the tree we feast on the scallops and the truffles and my husband serves as bartender whipping up a mean Manhattan, or for an interesting flavor treat maybe a Hooker Chocolate Truffle from the Hooker Brewing Company, based in Bloomfield.



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Holiday LIFE

Mara Dresner's Baked Ziti

Prep Time: 5 minutes
Bake Time: 60 minutes
Serves: 8

Ingredients:

1 26-ounce jar pasta sauce
1 1/2 cups water
15 ounce container ricotta (part skim is fine)
1/4 cup grated parmesan (fresh is best)
2 cups shredded mozzarella
8 ounces uncooked ziti
Frozen vegetables, optional
(a couple handfuls; I use broccoli florets)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
Combine sauce and water.
Stir in ricotta, parmesan and 1 cup mozzarella.
Add in uncooked ziti and vegetables, if using.
Spoon ziti mixture into 13" x 9" baking dish.
Cover with foil and bake 55 minutes.
Remove foil and sprinkle with remaining mozzarella.
Bake uncovered for 5 minutes.

This recipe from staff writer Mara Dresner is a delicious – and vegetarian – version of an Italian favorite. “Everyone loves this vegetarian recipe and it’s a breeze to make. You can prepare it the day before, and it’s easy to transport and very forgiving. Plus, you can easily “make it your own” and add a few healthy hacks. I’m not sure where I first found it, but I’ve noted some of my tips. If you do make ahead, save a little cheese (or bring more) to sprinkle on top when you reheat. Leftovers will do well in the fridge or freezer.”

Brandy (or rum) Balls

Ingredients:

1 box crushed vanilla wafers
(Nilla brand is best)
1 cup sifted confectioner’s sugar
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts
(optional)
1/4 cup brandy or rum
1/4 cup light corn syrup

Directions:

Combine all ingredients. Add a little water — about 1 1/2 tablespoons — and form 3/4-inch balls. Roll in colored sugar and store in a tightly covered container.

The above is from the family recipe box of Glastonbury LIFE editor Nancy Thompson. “Many came from people I haven’t seen in years, but I think of them whenever I recreate their beloved recipes.”

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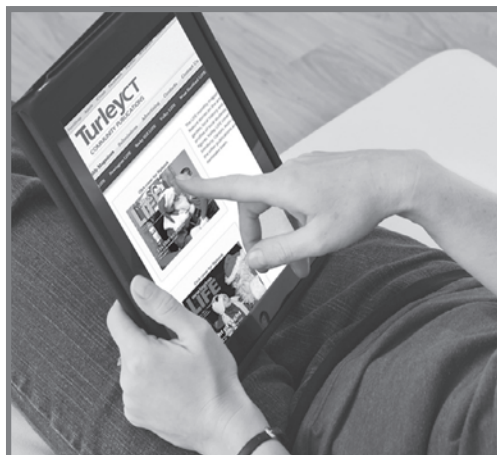
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Culture through conversation

Free ESL courses offered at Cora J. Belden Library

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Each Thursday morning, a small assemblage of people comes together in a large room in the basement of the Cora J. Belden Library. They vary in age and background and come from all corners of the earth – India, Jordan, Japan, Belarus – but they all share the common goal of improving themselves through language.

Volunteer Rosemary Dill, an English as a second language teacher for 25 years who is now retired, began these free ESL classes at the library two years ago and has been thrilled with the positive outcomes.

“If I went to another country, I would love to go to something like this,” she said. “I’ve seen friendships made in this group.”

The program offers short lessons on common English phrases, but more importantly, it provides English language learners with the opportunity to practice typical conversations in a safe and nonjudgmental environment.

“We learn English here, new words and new sentences, and we talk about any subject,” Alina Detaskev of Belarus said.

“My family speaks in Arabic,” Ola

The free English as a Second Language conversational class at the Cora J. Belden Library held a Thanksgiving dinner for its students who come from such far-away countries as India, Jordan, Belarus and Japan. The course is co-taught by Rosemary Dill and Mary Payne with Kathi Mag.



Courtesy photos

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“These are smart people, mostly women we see, but smart people who usually had full careers in their home countries.”

– Mary Payne

Neelima Bellamkonda, left, a native of India, shared in a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with her fellow English as a Second Language students at the Cora J. Belden Library.

Tabash of Jordan said. “I wanted to know the words, the holidays. I was scared at first. I wouldn’t talk, but here I’m not scared.”

The class is completely free to participants and, according to Dill, varies in size and makeup.

“Sometimes we have three people, sometimes we have 10,” she said.

For some of those who participate, it offers more culturally than it does about the language itself.

“We learned technical English when we were in India,” Uma Giovindarajulu said. “Coming here, we couldn’t speak with native speak-

ers because we didn’t know the slang.”

In addition to teaching basic English, Dill’s course also focuses on culture and conversation. During the Dec. 1 class, students learned about common idioms used in the United States that may not have direct translations, such as a “fair weather friend” or what it means when someone is “up in the air” about a decision.

“We forget that we usually don’t even finish a sentence without something that wouldn’t be in the dictionary,” Dill said.

To further help these learners

speak conversationally, Dill allows ample time for discussion of topics that are important to those in the class, from dealing with bullying at their child’s school, to the presidential election, to recipe tips.

“People too often look past these people because there is a language barrier,” Dill said.

She added that many times new immigrants are unable to get jobs due to lack of transportation or proper paperwork.

“These are smart people, mostly women we see, but smart people who usually had full careers in their

home countries,” volunteer ESL co-teacher Mary Payne said. “A lot of them are educated and smart and bored out of their minds at home.”

She enjoys having people continue to attend the classes and Dill said she knows that the eventual goal is to grow comfortable enough with the language to not need the weekly lessons. Throughout the two years that she has been running the program, with the aid of Payne and friend Kathi Mag, Dill has seen numerous people come and go, some returning to their home countries, others finding permanent jobs and others still reaching greater proficiency.

For those new to the country, however, these classes can offer not only a chance to learn English, but also a way to meet new people.

“One of the things I see for many is that without this, they would be socially isolated,” Mag said.

Payne considers being able to volunteer her time each week with these classes as more than just a way to give back to the community.

“People will say ‘isn’t it nice that you do this for other people?’” she said. “No, I do this for me. I do this for the joy I get out of it.”

Regardless of language proficiency, Dill, Payne and Mag all said they hope to be able to continue providing a safe and welcoming space for people to learn and grow educationally, socially and culturally.

“We mean it when we say all are welcome here,” Payne said. **RHL**

Free English as a Second Language conversational classes are offered at the Cora J. Belden Library every Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to noon.



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in the classroom

Working to make lasting connections

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

A new program at Rocky Hill High School aims to make sure that every student feels a connection through its mentoring program. Now in its second year, the program pairs trained mentors from the community with students who meet with them one hour per week.

School Psychologist Stephanie Malkin thought for years about creating this program. Now in her 13th year at the school, she said there was a small mentoring program at RHHS when she first arrived.

"It kind of fizzled out," she said. "I think it was always something that we knew would be helpful and beneficial, it was just a matter of how."

Malkin always knew she wanted to start up a mentoring program again, but the idea remained in the back of her mind until tragedy became her catalyst. After the devas-

tating killings of 26 students and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in her former hometown of Newtown, she began researching and attending mental health conferences to learn how to prevent those acts of violence.

"There was all this research that came out of Sandy Hook and overwhelmingly it said that for these young people, whether or not they have a connection with an adult, it can affect their path," she said. "I looked at this research and thought, if it's that simple, maybe there's something just as simple we could be doing to give these kids that connection."

With this thought, she spoke with the school administration and received support for the program. She next reached out to the Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce where she met chamber Secretary Shane Dugan and board member Joseph Wenzel.

"Stephanie kind of approached us with it and it was an opportunity that seemed too important to pass up," Dugan said. "Any time that we can help provide support systems for those kids who are underserved in whatever capacity, I think it just benefits the community as a whole."

With the full support of the chamber, Malkin, Dugan and Wenzel began working together to create the mechanics of the program. The chamber helps to promote the program and is also in charge of recruiting and training all volunteers.

"We're responsible for trying to find mentors and then going through the process of vetting them and training them," Dugan said.

Volunteer mentors also go through a full background check completed by the police department. Once they have completed their training with the chamber, Malkin will begin matching mentors with a

student of the same gender.

"We have an early intervention team at the school and through that we find students we think would be appropriate for the program," she said.

Matching students with mentors can prove challenging. They can only meet with their mentors during a free period in their schedule during the school day.

Malkin said that matching students with mentors who are free during the exact time coinciding with a study hall can be difficult, but it has not forced her to turn away any volunteers.

"If you're trained and willing to be a mentor, we'll find someone for you," she said.

When the program began last year, there were four student-mentor pairs at the high school. This year, that number has surpassed 10 and is likely to grow. To accommodate difficult schedules, a few of the

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EDUCATION

mentors were paired with elementary school students.

During the roughly one hour weekly time slot that mentors spend with their "mentees," the pair can choose whatever they want to do.

"I think a lot of people think if you're a mentor, you will be responsible for tutoring or helping with school work and that's really not what this is," Dugan said. "It's about spending the time with them. The other stuff will fall into place if you're there consistently as that resource."

Consistency is the key component. For many of the students assigned mentors, dependable relationships with adults are either rare or nonexistent.

"Consistency in this is so important," Malkin said. "They need to know they have an adult in their life they can count on."

She added simply being there on a consistent basis is often more important than what the mentors and mentees actually do.

"I think people thought you had

to come in with these insightful things to say and do and it's not like that," she said. "Sometimes it's playing board games, sometimes it's discussing what's going on at home or school. It's a very casual kind of encounter."

For 15-year-old Arianna Weaver, having a mentor provides someone to talk with each week about life.

"It's good that I can express myself and it's not someone who judges you," the sophomore said. "It helps a lot because keeping everything to yourself and not expressing it can be bad."

Some of the mentors said they have learned that listening to their mentee is far more important than whatever profound words they may have to offer.

"I just find that if a child has somebody who can listen, they'll do better," first-year mentor Craig Wallsten. "He talks for 98 percent of the time, but just in this short time, I've gotten to know him."

As someone who has participated in other mentoring programs,

such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, and as someone who has had mentors in his own life, Wallsten said it was important to him to be able to give that opportunity to a local student.

"I've had many mentors in my life," he said. "In December, I'll be going back to California to see an old basketball coach who was a real mentor to me, and that was 50 years ago. We still keep in touch."

"It's so important to have some sort of adult in your life," mayor and second-year volunteer Claudia Baio said. "It's nothing more than giving your time, but you're getting as much as you're giving."

For second-year volunteer Jack Chamis, pastor of Oasis of Life Christian Church, playing chess with his mentee has led to deeper conversations and a strong bond between the two. He feels that programs such as this one are beneficial to students who may not always get the attention they need.

"You see these kids who fall through the cracks, not through anyone's fault, but they just need an

extra helping hand," he said.

"Coming in from the outside, you're able to sit with them and really connect."

"Speak to somebody who's already done it," Baio said. "It may sound more daunting than it really is."

"Just show up. Just show up and it's going to be rewarding," Wallsten added. "That relationship is so worth it."

The mentors stressed, however, that if anyone fears they can't fully commit to a weekly meeting, then this program may not be a good fit.

"If you're going to make the commitment, you have to truly commit," Baio said. "For some of these kids, it would just feel like someone is leaving again."

The need for mentors is consistent and applications for the program are ongoing.

"You don't realize how profound spending an hour a week with a student can be," she said. "That's a game changer for a lot of these kids. It may not seem like a lot, but it's bigger than that for a lot of them." **RHL**

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News roundup



Town wins CCM honor

Town wins CCM honor

The town of Rocky Hill was honored by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities with a Municipal Award for Innovative Special Needs Activities. Among the programs cited were Sea Cubs, Challenger baseball and Sidekicks Soccer.

Also noted in the award was the construction of the new Miracle Field at Elm Ridge Park. Rocky Hill was selected in the category for towns that have a population between 20,000 and 40,000.

On hand to receive the award were, from left, parks and recreation staff Walt Sykes and Rita Chhabra, Economic Development Director Ray Carpentino, Camille Gilbert of human resources, Interim Town Manager John Mehr,

Mayor Claudia Baio and Lisa Zerio, director of parks and recreation.

BNI supports food bank

The Rocky Hill Rock Solid BNI business networking chapter took up a collection for the Rocky Hill Food Bank. The donations, both non-perishable food items and cash, were given to Human Services Director Melissa Hicks.

Shown in the photo are BNI Vice President Annie Mohanty, President Lev Gridley, town human services staff member Nicole Phillips, Hicks, Mayor Claudia Baio and fellow BNI member Hannah Jahn.

Historical society, high school collaborate

The Rocky Hill Historical Society has begun a collabora-

tion with the History Department at Rocky Hill High School to help students learn about local history. Society members recently visited the current events class of Onejda Dishnica.

Midge Sword, Robert Herron, Ed Chiucarello and Maureen Mullen provided assistance with research projects. The students were tasked with connecting Rocky Hill history with current topics and events.

Seven RHHS students paid a visit to the society's headquarters and museum on Old Main Street during the annual Lend a Paw Day. They helped move items between the storage shed and museum, inventoried items on the first floor and entered them into a database. **RHL**



BNI supports food bank

Events *spotlight*



Annual Santa's Run

Dec. 17, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All around Cromwell

860-635-0855

The Cromwell Fire Department will drive emergency vehicles decorated for the holidays throughout the town, visiting as many streets and homes as possible. Santa Claus will be on board a fire truck and available for photos. Candy canes will also be distributed. Firefighters will be collecting new and unwrapped toys for Cromwell Social Services to distribute to families in need, as well as items for the town's food bank and financial donations for its fuel bank.

Old Church Concert Series

Jan. 20, 7 p.m.

Rocky Hill United Methodist Church

623 Old Main St., Rocky Hill

oldchurchconcerts.com

This concert series returns with multiple performances scheduled for the new year. The concept is to showcase the wealth of original music and singer/songwriters in this area. First up are Robert Fullerton, Richard Neal and Kenn Morr. Admission is a free-will donation. Other concerts for 2017 are scheduled for Feb. 17, March 17, April 21 and May 19. Further shows will be added in September, October and November.

Comfort Food Dinner

Jan. 28, 5:30 p.m.

Rocky Hill Congregational Church

805 Old Main St., Rocky Hill

Chapin Hall is the location of this dinner that features salad, rolls, vegetables, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, ham, soda, coffee, tea and desserts. The meal will be followed by the Magic of Michael Michaels. Call Jeannie Alessi at 860-839-1321 for reservations. The cost is \$10 for adults, \$5 for ages 4-12, free for children younger than 4, and a family cap of \$35.



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Slice of LIFE

photos by Abigail Albair



The second annual Griswold Middle School Veterans Day Fun Run was held Nov. 11 at Elm Ridge Park. Hosted by the GMS Social Studies Department, the run serves to honor those who have served in the military and helped to protect and preserve the nation's freedom. This year's event served to benefit the Connecticut Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill. Throughout the morning, students walked from the middle school to the park, many wearing celebratory colors, and ran a course around the perimeter of the park. Different sessions of the run were held by grade level. A brief ceremony marked the beginning of each race.



Veterans Day Fun Run

1. Many students wore face paint and red, white and blue attire during the second annual fun run. **2.** Students leave the start line of the race, which was run in heats by grade level throughout the morning on Veterans Day. **3.** Students ran a course around the perimeter of the park, winding down the hill from the bandshell in the final stretch. **4.** These students were all smiles as they ran the final leg of the race. **5.** Principal Rick Watson spoke to students during brief ceremonies that opened each heat of the race. He discussed the importance of recognizing veterans for their service, and read a list of names of family members and friends of members of the Griswold community who students asked be recognized for their time in the military. A few local veterans were also in attendance at the ceremonies. **6-8.** Students show off their American pride during the run, which served to benefit the Connecticut Veterans' Home at Rocky Hill.



January *calendar*

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

3 Knitting Group, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31

4 Playgroup Plus, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Jan. 11, 14, 18, 21, 26 and 28

Adult Coloring, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Jan. 11, 18 and 26

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

5 La Leche League, 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

English as a Second Language, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Jan. 12, 19 and 26

9 SCORE Small Business Counseling, 12:30 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

Happy Birthday Cora J. Belden, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J.

Belden Library
Be a Library Super User, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., registration requested, Cora J. Belden Library

10 Tech Help Series: Clean Up & Speed Up Your Computer, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

11 Preschool Expo, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

14 Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 2 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

17 Tech Help Series: Backing Up Your Data, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

Health and Wellness Series with Dr. Klughers: Magnificent Memory, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

18 Monthly Makerspace, 5:30 p.m., children in grades 5 and under must be

accompanied by an adult, Cora J. Belden Library

23 E-learning and Job Resources, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., registration requested, Cora J. Belden Library

24 Tech Help Series: Online Shopping, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

Robbie Burns Night Celebration, 6:30 p.m., registration requested, Cora J. Belden Library

30 Downloadable Books and Magazines for Your Device, 2 p.m. or 7 p.m., registration requested, Cora J. Belden Library

31 Tech Help Series: Sell Your Stuff Online, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Editorial

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season

It's that magical time of the year when people celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's. The weather becomes a bit chilly and we start to see the snows of winter.

We all tend to rush around shopping, attending office and family gatherings, planning dinners, writing greeting cards and so much more. Did we mention shopping?

That's all fine, but this is also the season of good will toward others. Here are a few thoughts and suggestions to make the holidays a little bit more enjoyable for everyone.

Say hello when passing a stranger on the sidewalk. It can't hurt and you might even get a smile in return.

Drop a few dollars or your spare change into the Salvation Army kettle or give to the charity or charities of your choice. They are all heavily dependent upon holiday season giving to fund their activities throughout the year.

Offer to help a senior citizen carry heavy bags of gifts or groceries. Look over your shoulder when passing through a door and, if someone is behind you, hold it open for that person instead of letting it close in his or her face.

Give a box or can of food to the town food bank. There are people in need who would give anything to have the kind of holiday meals most people will enjoy.

Slow down on the roads and let the other car go first. We all tend to become assertive drivers, especially when the roads are busy. Take a deep breath and let someone else have all the stress.

Find the time to listen to some music, drink some cocoa, bake some cookies, spend quality time with others. Slow the rat race of the holiday season to more of a jog or, if possible, a walk.

Take the time to enjoy the lights, decorations and music. Look for little things you can do to make other people happy. Those little things can really add up.

The weather will become cold, dark and foreboding soon enough. Let's all celebrate the actual and spiritual light of this season while we can.

Turley CT Community Publications wishes all the best this holiday season to our readers and advertisers. We'll see you again in 2017.

rocky hill LIFE

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



Ceiling Fans, Winter Use...

Typically one thinks of using a ceiling fan in the warmer months, as it creates a wind 'chill' effect – making it feel cooler in your home. This happens when the blades are traveling in a counter-clockwise direction. By using a fan in this manner, it helps save energy and

money since you're able to raise the thermostat setting.

So clearly they are beneficial during the summer, but are you getting the most out of your ceiling fan during the winter months? Instead of letting them collect dust, put them to use!

Now regardless of season, warm air rises ... collecting near

the ceiling. So when paying to heat your home, why not get that warm air back down closer to where we live? For the best efficiency when it's cold outside, the blades should travel in a clockwise direction (stand beneath the fan or lie on your bed and look up to determine which way they are spinning). Making this change

re-circulates the warm air by creating an updraft, pushing it down the walls and back into the room at the same time. This happens without creating a cooling effect.

So if you don't have a ceiling fan, perhaps consider getting one... the energy savings can be significant, year-round. **RHL**



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